

REPORT
ON
CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TRIP TO
SOUTHEAST ASIA
TO THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NINETY-EIGHTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION



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MACK FLEMING, *Chief Counsel and Staff Director*

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FOREWORD

It was my privilege and honor to head a delegation of six members on a trip to Indochina from December 6-17, 1984.

During that period we visited Hawaii, the Republic of the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Burma. The delegation met with high officials in all of the countries visited as well as representatives of the U.S. State Department. In addition, we met with Veterans' Administration and military officials in Hawaii and the Philippines. The meetings included discussions on the health effects on humans exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange, Amerasian children, the status of Vietnamese still being held in reeducation camps in Vietnam and servicemen who continue to be listed as missing in action (MIA) from the Vietnam conflict. In Hawaii and the Philippines, the delegation visited facilities where benefits for veterans and their dependents are provided and/or administered by the Veterans' Administration. In the Philippines, the delegation met with the Deputy Director of the VA regional office and received a thorough update of its programs and activities.

I want to especially commend LTC Warren Taylor, U.S. Army Liaison Officer, and his staff for helping make this a most productive and pleasant trip. LTC Taylor was always available to the members, and his cooperation and support are deeply appreciated by all members of the delegation. It was a long arduous trip which took us to countries that Congressional delegations have visited infrequently. Special praise is extended to COL Ira Mehlman, M.D. the delegation physician. He anticipated our every need and his care and concern for our welfare were crucial to the success of the trip. The trip took a lot of planning and we salute LTC Taylor and his staff and COL Mehlman for a job well done.

I also want to single out for special thanks Henry J. Kenny, Senior Foreign Affairs Officer for Asia, U.S. Arms Control Agency, and J. Richard Bock, Office of Legislative Affairs for the Department of State whose advice and counsel were vital to the success of the trip. I would be most remiss if I failed to mention Wilbur E. Garrett, editor of the National Geographic Magazine.

Perhaps no other American is as familiar and knowledgeable of the history, customs, and cultures of the nations of Southeast Asia we visited. We thank Bill Garrett for a most important contribution.

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It was an extremely worthwhile trip. Significant information was obtained which will be helpful in our resolution of the issues and programs which were reviewed.

The delegation was fortunate to have a magnificent flight crew, led by LTC Lenwood Steward, to see to our comfort and to provide an enjoyable and safe journey.

I have received many inquiries concerning the visit. This report includes findings and recommendations which will be useful in the work of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and all Members of Congress.

The delegation noted an increasingly evident Soviet presence during its visit to Indochina and is concerned that the Soviet buildup is continuing while American influence in Indochina remains negligible. This is particularly disturbing because in every location we visited, the people were genuinely friendly. It was obvious that they like Americans.

The delegation concluded that an open and continuing conversation between the countries of Indochina and the U.S. is important to the mutual best interests of our nations.

G. V. (Sonny) MONTGOMERY, Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs

THE DELEGATION

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Veterans' Affairs Committee
Mr. J. Richard Bock, Office of Legislative
Affairs, State Department
COL Ira Mehlman, M.D., Delegation Physician
LTC Warren Taylor, Army Liaison
SSGT Jay Creekmur, Army Escort
SGT Ronald L. Starling, Army Escort
Dr. Henry J. Kenny, Senior Foreign Affairs Officer for
Asia, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
Mr. Wilbur E. Garrett, Editor, National Geographic
Magazine

INTRODUCTION

During the period of December 6-17, 1984, the delegation visited Hawaii, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma to discuss issues which are legacies of the Vietnam conflict--the possible adverse health effects of exposure to Agent Orange on humans; Amerasian children; Americans who continue to be listed as missing in action, the MIAs whose families are deeply concerned as to the whereabouts of their remains; and the citizens of the former Republic of South Vietnam who supported the U.S. during the Vietnam war and are still being held in "reeducation camps."

The delegation also visited a Veterans' Administration facility in Honolulu and was briefed by an official of the Veterans' Administration in Manila. The delegation also visited the Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC) in Honolulu, which is the arm of the Government responsible for continuing efforts to locate and identify remains of U.S. servicemen still listed as missing in action.

Prior to departure the delegation discussed these and other issues pertaining to Southeast Asia with Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Affairs, Paul Wolfowitz, as well as with other officials from the State Department and the White House. This report summarizes the findings of the delegation and is intended to provide greater understanding of key issues currently affecting both American citizens and the future relationship of the United States with the countries of Indochina.

Assisting the members of the delegation throughout the trip were Francis W. Stover, Deputy Chief Counsel, and James Holley, Director of Public Affairs, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs; LTC Warren Taylor, U.S. Army; J. Richard Bock, U.S. State Department; and Henry J. Kenny, Senior Foreign Affairs Officer for Asia, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

SCOPE OF REPORT

This report provides current information furnished by officials of the countries we visited on the issues of Agent Orange, MIAs, Amerasian children, and political prisoners in reeducation camps, and the status of a number of veterans' programs being administered by the Veterans' Administration in Honolulu and Manila. It is hopeful that this information will be helpful to the Members of the Committee and to the Congress as they are called upon to consider legislation on these issues and programs.

PURPOSE OF THE MISSION

The primary purpose of the mission was to investigate a number of issues which are of continuing deep concern to all Americans. In the veteran community, the possible adverse health effects on veterans having been exposed to the defoliant Agent Orange is a priority issue. We know that Agent Orange used in Vietnam was contaminated with trace amounts of dioxin, but there is much uncertainty that exposure to Agent Orange causes long-term adverse health effects. Therefore, a major priority of the trip was to meet with top officials of the government of Vietnam and neighboring countries to learn firsthand the effects of exposure to Agent Orange on its veterans and citizens and what is being done about it.

There are a number of American servicemen listed as missing in action from the Vietnam conflict. One purpose of the mission was to find as much information as possible on these individuals.

There were discussions regarding an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 Amerasian children, many roaming the streets of Ho Chi Minh City, who both sides agree should be allowed to emigrate to the United States.

Many of our former allies and supporters during the Vietnam war are still being held in so-called reeducation camps. We wanted to find out firsthand from the officials of these governments the facts on the issues as they view them, and to exchange views on possible solutions or procedures which could help our Government to bring these matters to a successful conclusion as soon as possible.

BACKGROUND ON AGENT ORANGE

Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam era are deeply concerned about possible long-term health effects of exposure to herbicides containing dioxin. There is scientific and medical uncertainty regarding such long-term adverse health effects.

In Public Law 97-72, the Congress responded to that uncertainty by authorizing priority medical care at Veterans' Administration facilities for any disability of a veteran who may have been so exposed (even though there is insufficient medical evidence linking such disability with such exposure).

The Congress has further responded to that medical and scientific uncertainty by requiring, in Public Law 96-151 and Public Law 98-160, the conduct of thorough epidemiological studies of the health effects experienced by veterans in connection with exposure to herbicides containing dioxin. There are 66 federally-sponsored research projects being conducted relating to herbicides containing dioxin, at a cost to the Federal Government in excess of \$130 million.

The initial results of one project--an epidemiological study conducted by the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine on the health status of the "Ranch Hand" veterans who carried out the loading and aerial spraying of herbicides containing dioxin in Vietnam and who, in the process, came into direct skin contact with such herbicides in their most concentrated liquid form--were released on February 24, 1984. The results contained the conclusion "that there is insufficient evidence to support a cause and effect relationship between herbicide exposure and adverse health in the Ranch Hand group at this time."

In approving H.R. 1961 (Public Law 98-542) Congress reaffirmed its strong commitment to those citizens who have served their country through service in the Armed Forces during a period of war. Now the Veterans' Administration is required to conduct a careful, thorough, systematic review of the evidence regarding claims for compensation due to exposure to Agent Orange. Public Law 98-542 represents the culmination of two years of work by the Congress and is an example of the attention being given to this subject by the Congress.

ITINERARY

DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL TIMES

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6

8:00 AM Depart Washington, D.C.
1:15 PM Arrive Honolulu, Hawaii

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7

8:00 AM Depart Honolulu
(Cross International Dateline)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8

12:30 PM Arrive Manila, Philippines

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9

9:00 AM Depart Manila
10:45 AM Arrive Hanoi, Vietnam

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11

9:00 AM Depart Hanoi
10:50 AM Arrive Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12

10:30 AM Depart Ho Chi Minh City
11:15 AM Arrive Phnom Penh, Cambodia

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13

8:00 AM Depart Phnom Penh
8:45 AM Arrive Ho Chi Minh City
9:30 AM Depart Ho Chi Minh City
11:30 AM Arrive Vientiane, Laos

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14

9:00 AM Depart Vientiane
9:50 AM Arrive Rangoon, Burma

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15

8:00 AM Depart Rangoon
2:00 PM Arrive Clark Air Base, Philippines

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16

8:00 AM	Depart Clark Air Base (Cross International Dateline)
12:40 AM	Arrive Hickam AFB, Hawaii

MONDAY, DECEMBER 17

7:00 AM	Depart Hickam AFB
9:20 PM	Arrive Washington, D.C.

VISIT TO HONOLULU

A major purpose of the delegation was to learn firsthand the status of plans by the Veterans' Administration and Department of the Army to renovate an existing wing at Tripler Army Medical Center. The Veterans' Administration has a regional office in Hawaii but no hospital. There are over 100,000 veterans in Hawaii whose medical care is provided through an outpatient clinic.

The outpatient clinic is located in the Federal Building. The clinic operates a 20-bed VA psychiatric ward (the Max Cleland Ward), located at Tripler Army Medical Center. Current plans include the renovation of an existing inpatient wing to house a 130-bed long-term care facility. This will be located on the Tripler Center grounds. Veterans medical activities have a fiscal year 1984 authorized staffing level of 100.3 full-time employees. The outpatient clinic has been affiliated with the University of Hawaii Patient Clinic School of Medicine since February 1975.

The delegation met with Army and Veterans' Administration officials at Tripler Army Medical Center. The briefing was presented by General Tracy Strevey, Commanding General of the center, who later provided us with a tour of the facility. The delegation found that the center is providing high quality health care. Dr. William J. Vandervoort, Veterans' Administration Clinic Director, also briefed the delegation on the progress of the E-Wing of Tripler which, upon completion, will be used to provide long-term and psychiatric care for veterans. Dr. Vandervoort is deeply concerned that the construction schedule may not keep on track and there will be a delay on its final completion.

The delegation also inquired about the effectiveness of the "Vet Center" in Honolulu and about Agent Orange. Dr. Vandervoort described the Vet Center, which has seven Veterans' Administration personnel, as excellent. Dr. Vandervoort said that the Veterans' Administration clinic has conducted over 500 medical exams on Vietnam veterans who may have been exposed to Agent Orange. Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Hammerschmidt indicated that upon their return to Washington, they would meet with the new Veterans' Administration Chief Medical Director, Dr. John W. Ditzler, to make sure the construction of the E-Wing would not fall behind schedule.

Presently, veterans in Hawaii who require hospitalization are referred to Tripler Army Medical Center, which serves as the Federal tertiary medical center of the Pacific Basin. Veterans

requiring open heart and spinal cord injury rehabilitation are referred to VA medical centers on the mainland. The Honolulu VA Outpatient Clinic provides a broad range of general medical and outpatient treatments, including a mental health clinic, alcohol rehabilitation program, day treatment center and 19 subspecialty clinics. The need for a VA facility in Hawaii to provide inpatient psychiatric and nursing home care has long been recognized. The Army has requested fiscal year 1985 funds to construct new facilities at Tripler Medical Center. The Army has agreed to make the E-Wing Building available to the VA upon completion of the construction of their new buildings. The E-Wing Building will be available to the VA in late 1987 or early 1988.

Remodel E-Wing, Tripler Army Medical Center FY 1987 (Design)
\$4,200,000 FY 1988 (Construction) \$37,800,000

This project proposes to renovate the E-Wing Building at Tripler Army Medical Center in order to accommodate 60 to 70 psychiatric beds and 60 nursing home care beds. Construction will provide modern nursing units, establishment of the necessary support services and updating of all utility systems. The Advance Planning Fund (APF) process associated with this project will determine the overall scope of work to be accomplished.

VA REGIONAL OFFICE -- MANILA, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

The delegation was briefed by Frank T. Tajalle, Assistant Director, in the absence of Howard Price, Director, who was attending a conference in Washington, D.C. Mr. Tajalle gave an overview of the Veterans' Administration activities in the Philippines and a brief history of the office since it was established shortly after World War I.

The U.S. Veterans' Administration in the Philippines is charged with the responsibility of administering the various laws of the United States which provide benefits for veterans and their beneficiaries residing in the Philippines. The office now has 206 employees, including nine Americans.

Mr. Tajalle stated there are several distinct groups of veterans in the Philippines who are potential USVA beneficiaries. These include 20,000 old Philippine Scouts and others who served in the regular components of the U.S. Armed Forces as far back as the Spanish-American War; 110,000 Commonwealth Army Veterans who saw action during World War II; 312,000 recognized guerrillas who joined the resistance movement after the fall of Bataan and Corregidor; and 30,000 new Philippine Scouts who were recruited after liberation to patrol and police territories formerly occupied by Japan. The total is 472,000, of whom an estimated 203,000 may still be living. The widows, children and dependent parents of veterans who died in or as a result of their military service are also entitled to benefits from the USVA.

The largest portion of the USVA activity is directed toward the payment of monetary benefits. Current disbursements average \$10.5 million monthly or \$126 million a year. Total USVA disbursements to the Philippines since 1946 have exceeded \$2.6 billion.

The USVA also maintains an outpatient clinic in Manila. This clinic provides treatment and authorizes hometown treatment and medication to veterans for service-connected conditions. By law it is the admitting service for USVA veterans at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center and determines legal eligibility and medical need for hospitalization.

Mr. Tajalle emphasized there is also in the Manila Regional Office a unique USVA activity - the U.S. Social Security Program in the Philippines. These beneficiaries are mostly Filipinos who worked in the United States and earned Social Security coverage, or their survivors. At present, there are 31,859 Social Security beneficiaries who are receiving payments in the Philippines. These benefits now total \$6.7 million a month.

Mr. Tajalle stated that the USVA enjoys an excellent relationship with the veterans organizations in the Philippines, particularly with the Veterans Federation of the Philippines and the Philippine Department of the American Legion.

Legislation is required to authorize the USVA to maintain an office in the Philippines. The present authority terminates on September 30, 1985.

THE VETERANS MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER

Under the Rogers Act (Public Law 88-65), the United States constructed and equipped the Veterans Memorial Hospital (VMH) at a cost of \$9,400,000. The hospital was turned over to the Philippine government in 1955 and is now known as the Veterans Memorial Medical Center.

Eligible veterans are hospitalized at the VMMC on a contract per diem basis. Aside from VMMC, there are several fee-basis hospitals throughout the country where service-connected veterans may seek emergency medical care.

Public Law 97-72 authorized the Veterans' Administration to contract with VMMC for the care of U.S. veterans in the Philippines. The Veterans' Administration was also authorized to furnish grants up to \$500,000 annually for 5 years to assist the VMMC in the replacement and upgrading of its equipment, including the rehabilitation of its physical plant and facilities. In implementing Public Law 97-72, the Philippine government agreed to assume full responsibility for the medical care and treatment of all eligible Filipino veterans effective October 1, 1981.

The delegation asked about the future status of the regional office and the \$500,000 grant which must be reauthorized or extended beyond fiscal year 1986. Mr. Tajalle was most emphatic that this is a unique regional office and is especially suited to handle claims of Filipino veterans.

One of the persistent problems that is unique to this office is fraudulent and misrepresented claims. This problem is stimulated by a very low average annual income for the Philippines. This VA regional office saves and will continue to save the U.S. Government millions of dollars in its adjudication of claims for benefits, which would not be the case stateside. The delegation felt that the regional office is doing a good job and that it should be maintained.

Mr. Tajalle also informed the delegation that the Veterans Memorial Medical Center which is now owned and operated by the Philippine Government is still in desperate need for equipment and assistance. Mr. Tajalle urged favorable consideration of an extension of this assistance. The delegation indicated that it would take a look at this next year.

The delegation also had the pleasure of meeting with top veteran leaders, including American Legion National Commander Clarence M. Bacon, who reaffirmed the American Legion support for Congress to extend the authorization for a regional office in Manila when it expires next year and to continue Veterans' Administration grants for the Veterans Memorial Medical Center at the current level of \$500,000 a year.

JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER (JCRC)

Enroute to Indochina the group met with the Commander and staff of the Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC) in Hawaii. JCRC officials described the history of their efforts since the Center was established in January 1973 to assist in the recovery or status resolution of unaccounted for Americans in Southeast Asia. They expressed the hope that current quarterly meetings with Vietnamese officials would lead to improved Vietnamese efforts in locating crash sites and in providing information and remains of missing Americans. They anticipated that the Lao agreement in principle to permit joint excavation of a crash site near Pakse, in which several Americans were lost, would result in a prompt and full on-site investigation.

MANILA

The delegation stopped in Manila for the night prior to going on to Hanoi. Ambassador Stephen Bosworth and his staff, including Frank J. Tajalle, assistant director of the Veterans' Administration office, briefed the members on the current situation in the Philippines and discussed with them various aspects of Philippine - American relations.

HANOI

In Hanoi, the delegation met with Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, Vice Foreign Minister Phan Doan Nam, and several other officials. The Congressmen stressed the humanitarian nature of their mission and expressed hope for the fullest possible Vietnamese cooperation on the four issues of concern.

With respect to MIAs, it was emphasized that progress in resolving as many cases as possible would remove an obstacle in our bilateral relationship. Along with peaceful cooperation and negotiations with its neighbors in Cambodia, it could, as stated by

President Reagan in July, bring about normal relations between Vietnam and the international community. The delegation stressed the importance of this issue to the American people, and the view that progress on this issue could lead to progress in other areas.

The Vietnamese officials agreed with the concept of treating the MIA issue as a separate humanitarian concern. They expressed satisfaction with the existing framework of joint meetings to help resolve MIA matters. They stated that Vietnam had uncovered no new information on missing Americans, but would provide any information which was uncovered. The officials expressed the hope that the United States would reciprocate by assisting Vietnam in healing the wounds of war in their country. When asked whether any Americans whatsoever were being held prisoner in Vietnam, they replied that no Americans are alive in captivity except Mr. William Mathers. Mathers was apprehended last July on charges of violating Vietnamese territorial waters. The delegation asked for the prompt release of Mathers, and was told by the Vietnamese that officials would check into the matter. The case is under the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry.

While disassociating the humanitarian issue of MIAs from other matters, the Vietnamese did state that humanitarian concerns are a two-way street. They mentioned that there are over a million Vietnamese MIAs, that searching for American MIAs is expensive, and that it is difficult for them to ask their people to search for American MIAs when there are so many Vietnamese MIAs. The delegation urged the Vietnamese to discuss with the U.S. Joint Casualty Resolution Center the question of providing the necessary equipment and materials for the excavation of aircraft crash sites. It expressed the belief that such assistance would not be overly expensive. It reiterated the hope, both to Foreign Ministry officials and to Premier Pham Van Dong, that progress on MIAs was crucial to our long-term relationship. Congressman Montgomery asked Premier Dong to permit MIA family members to visit Vietnam on behalf of their missing men. The Premier said he would consider this request.

On the issue of Amerasian children, the delegation expressed appreciation that the numbers departing Vietnam had increased in recent months, that Vietnam had provided a partial list of Amerasian children to the U.S. Government, and that Vietnam had agreed

to let all such children and their immediate families depart for the United States. The Congressmen asked for the total number of Amerasian children in Vietnam and requested a list of additional children. They also expressed hope that the number of such departures would continue to increase in the future.

The Vietnamese replied that their Government is compiling an additional list of Amerasian children, that there is some difficulty in discriminating between French and American Asian children, and that they will provide the list when completed. They expressed the view that the existing Orderly Departure Program (ODP) quota for Amerasian children is too low, and that if the past rate of departure continued, it could take 10 years for all Amerasian children to leave Vietnam. They proposed that a new program, separate from the ODP, be established so that all Amerasians could depart within six months, adding that Amerasians should not be considered refugees since they are U.S. citizens. They said that the total number of Amerasian children is between 10,000 and 15,000, that they are American citizens, and that the United States should take them as soon as possible. The Vietnamese volunteered that Vietnam is not discriminating against Amerasian children and that they receive equal treatment with Vietnamese children.

The delegation noted that while most Amerasian children are not considered American citizens, the United States is prepared to take them all in an orderly manner as soon as possible. It again expressed appreciation for the increased rate of departures.

With respect to Vietnamese in "reeducation camps" who were associated with the United States or the government or military of the former Republic of Vietnam, the delegation emphasized the importance of a prompt release. It asked for a list of prisoners and an estimate of their total number. The Congressmen noted that Vietnamese leaders have stated their willingness to release all such prisoners and that Secretary Shultz has said that the United States will accept them.

The delegation expressed concern that their departure be regulated so as to avoid problems such as those associated with Castro's release of Cuban prisoners a few years ago. It was suggested that both sides might agree to the release of 1,000 prisoners as an initial step in a program for the release of all such persons.

The Vietnamese responded by labeling these prisoners as "criminals," stating they had opposed and fought against their government and were therefore guilty of breaking Vietnamese law. Such "criminals," they said, could not be released under a program designed for refugees. They further stated that the total number of such prisoners was less than one percent of the 1.5 million South Vietnamese they said opposed them during the war. They described these persons as the most intransigent and most bellicose, and expressed a strong fear that the prisoners, if released, would independently or with the support of the United States, conduct anti-Vietnamese activity both in America and Indochina. They asked for a commitment or a guarantee that such activity would not take place, stating that only by negotiating such an agreement would the release be possible.

The delegation also asked to visit "reeducation camps." The Vietnamese declined to grant the request to visit a "reeducation camp," saying that their representatives at the United Nations are restricted to within 25 miles of the city - clearly implying linkage to American travel in Vietnam.

The delegation reiterated its expectation that the Vietnamese prisoners would soon be released. It urged that the definition of these prisoners as "refugees" or "criminals" not be a stumbling block to their release. It pointed out that there are U.S. laws which prohibit organized private groups from hostile activities in foreign countries and that the released prisoners would be interested only in building a new life and supporting their families in the United States. It is the opinion of the delegation that Vietnamese travel in the United States, outside the 25 mile limit in New York, be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In a separate meeting, Congressman Bonior asked Vietnamese officials in Hanoi to permit the departure of two Vietnamese who had relatives in his district. The officials promised to raise the matter with local Vietnamese authorities.

The delegation discussed the concern of many on the possible long term health effects on veterans of U.S. Armed Forces who served in Vietnam. In this regard, the delegation referred to a number of studies being conducted in the U.S. to determine if there have been adverse health effects on persons exposed to Agent Orange or other chemicals during the period 1961-1972. The Vietnamese responded by referring to the International Symposium on Herbicides and Defoliants: The Long Term Effects on Man and Nature, which was

held in 1983 in Ho Chi Minh City. The Symposium drew participants from 21 countries including a number of American scientists and researchers. Twenty-nine reports were filed as well as 72 scientific papers. The conclusion of the Symposium was that exposure to chemicals (Agent Orange) does cause health problems for humans.

The delegation asked if the Vietnamese soldiers who were exposed to Agent Orange had suffered adverse health effects and whether the Vietnamese have any statistics or reliable information regarding the matter. The Vietnamese responded that there had been a strong increase in the number of females coming to their hospitals who had health problems traceable to being exposed to Agent Orange when they were quite young. The Vietnamese had no records or information on their own soldiers. It was indicated that the Vietnamese do not have the resources or scientific personnel to conduct such a study. The Vietnamese, however, were open to suggestions for independent studies by scientists from the international community.

The delegation pointed out that there have been many changes in Vietnam since the defoliant was sprayed. Therefore, time is of the essence in conducting such a study. The Vietnamese, in this regard, indicated there will be follow-ups to the 1983 symposium but did not indicate when.

Besides the foregoing issues of concern to the delegation, the Vietnamese officials raised several political issues of concern to them. First, they were clearly interested in increased dialogue with the U.S. Government, often stating that diplomatic relations would facilitate resolution of outstanding differences as well as help assure peace and stability in Southeast Asia. They felt some progress on bilateral issues could be made in the absence of normalization, but that such progress would, of necessity, be limited. Second, while maintaining that most of the four issues raised by the delegation should be and are humanitarian and not political issues, they stressed their expectation that humanitarian assistance be a "two-way street." While not specifying the form American humanitarian assistance would take, they emphasized that Vietnam is a poor country and needs assistance in many areas. Third, they criticized China in the strongest possible terms, even to the point of saying China used the war in Vietnam as a means to increase its influence in Southeast Asia. In this context, they quoted a statement attributed to General William Westmoreland that China had been prepared to fight the war in Vietnam to the last

Vietnamese. Beginning in 1975, they said, China and the United States cut a deal by which China would pressure Vietnam. During the past year, in their opinion, American collusion with China increased significantly. Fourth, the Vietnamese stated the position that their troops could be withdrawn from Cambodia provided support for Pol Pot was removed and an agreement was reached on a regional arrangement for Southeast Asia involving both the ASEAN and Indochina countries. In this context, as well as in the context of joining ASEAN, the Vietnamese stated that they realized Vietnam could not ask the United States to abandon its bases in the Philippines, but did require assurances that the bases would not be used against Vietnam.

The delegation took note of these Vietnamese concerns. It expressed appreciation of Vietnamese agreement in treating the issues of MIAs, Agent Orange, and Amerasians as separate humanitarian concerns and reiterated the hope and expectation that progress would be made in all four areas raised by the delegation. Congressman Montgomery stressed the need for Vietnam to withdraw its forces from Cambodia and agreed that Pol Pot should never return to power. The delegation agreed that the United States and Vietnam have differences of opinion over many issues, but that increased dialogue by both executive and legislative groups would improve mutual understanding and resolve as many differences as possible.

HO CHI MINH CITY

In Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) the delegation met with Director of External Affairs Vu Hac Bong, and with Vice Chairman of the City People's Committee, Le Quang Chanh. The officials opened with considerable detail, emphasizing economic development in the city. They said, *inter alia*, that there are 150,000 handicraft workers now operating, and that construction of a power plant and grid system is underway which will provide the city an additional 400,000 kw of power. They claimed an annual increase in industrial production of 16-20 percent during the 1980-1984 period. They said there remained a large number (80-90,000) of unemployed persons, which was partially due to a high birth rate. The present birth rate was put at 1.9 percent, down from 2.8 percent in 1975. The objective for 1985 is a 1.5 percent birth rate, which Vietnamese officials hope to achieve through a family planning public information program, as well as promotion of abortions, which are free of charge at local hospitals.

Regarding the Chinese population of metropolitan Ho Chi Minh City, the Vietnamese said their number had dropped from 540,000 in 1978 to 420,000 in 1984. Many had departed, they said, because the Peoples Republic of China had stirred them up in support of Pol Pot. Some 165,000 ethnic Chinese in Vietnam left for China in 1978, some by Chinese ships and some illegally. The remaining overseas Chinese, they said, are loyal to Vietnam.

The Vietnamese also indicated that there would be a major trial before the Supreme Court in Ho Chi Minh City beginning December 14, 1984, which would involve the prosecution of a few rich and former rich Vietnamese, as well as overseas Chinese. (Local rumor held that over 100 persons had already been arrested in connection with the trial.) With respect to punishment attending this or other crimes, the officials said policy indicated the punishment should match the crime. Capital punishment by shooting is permissible.

The delegation requested information on the status of Amerasians in southern Vietnam and was told that at the outset of the ODP program there were an estimated 15,000 Amerasian children. Since that time some 4,300 persons, including both Amerasian children and their immediate family members, were said to have left Vietnam for the United States under the ODP. The officials repeated the statement made in Hanoi that Vietnam was working on a new list. According to these officials, for every one Amerasian child there is an average of two other family members. If these numbers are correct, the delegation estimates that the total number of departees under this category could exceed 40,000.

When asked if he had any information on American MIAs, Mr. Chanh responded in the negative. He also indicated, in response to a query by Mr. Montgomery, that he knows of no Americans residing in Ho Chi Minh City.

In Ho Chi Minh City the delegation also met with a visiting group from the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), a national veterans organization with wide ranging membership. The delegation was told that the VVA had sent two persons to Can Tho in an unsuccessful attempt to visit and obtain the release of Mr. William Mathers. Another group of VVA members had the opportunity to visit a crash site about 30 miles outside of Hanoi. Traveling with the VVA was Dr. Arnold Schecter from Binghamton, New York, who is engaged in a study of Agent Orange and its effects on the Vietnamese. Dr. Schecter had conducted analyses on 30 specimens of

persons who may have been exposed to Agent Orange, and was attempting to determine whether a significant difference existed between these and unexposed persons in northern Vietnam.

PHNOM PENH

The delegation was the largest Congressional group to visit Cambodia in 10 years. The mission was intended to open a productive dialogue on problem areas of both countries. During their one day and overnight stay in Phnom Penh, the Members visited the Tuol Sleng prison where Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge, tortured and murdered thousands of Cambodians as well as some foreign nationals. The group visited a mass grave outside the city where 9,000 victims had been buried. Many of these persons had been lined up and blindfolded, with hands tied behind their backs. They were then struck a heavy blow over the head and dumped into mass pits.

The delegation unanimously condemns the atrocities which were perpetrated by the Pol Pot regime. The mass murder, between 1975 and 1979, of an estimated 3 million men, women, and children, including the entire class of professional people, is a holocaust in every sense of the word. The delegation stresses the need for the withdrawal of all foreign support for Pol Pot, as well as the removal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. In addition, it expresses the hope that, in the future, an independent government of the people will be allowed to assume power, and that this government will be able to conduct relations with the other countries of Southeast Asia on a basis of peace and friendship. Mr. Montgomery expressed the hope that the United States will be very careful not to support Pol Pot in any way, including votes at the United Nations. He notes that the delegation is "definitely against" a return to power by Pol Pot.

While in Cambodia the delegation met with Foreign Minister Hun Sen, as well as with several other officials. The Foreign Minister said that there were only 70 people alive when his men first reached Phnom Penh. He asked the delegation to see for itself the atrocities committed by Pol Pot. Besides the millions murdered by Pol Pot, the Foreign Minister stated there are today 200,000 orphans in Cambodia as a result of Khmer Rouge killings. He strongly denied that Cambodia is a Vietnamese colony, stating that his is a regime not fabricated in Hanoi.

The Foreign Minister criticized what he called Chinese - American - Thai collusions against Cambodia by their support for Pol Pot and Son Sann, the leader of the anti-Communist guerrilla force. He stated that although the war had ended 10 years ago, the United States has not stopped its war against Cambodia. In his opinion, the Western media is waging a propaganda war against Cambodia. To resolve the problem, he suggested an agreement among the ASEAN states, Indochina, India and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, to form an internationally supervised security zone along the Thai border. He further requested the United States to separate itself from Pol Pot, whom he said must be eliminated both politically and militarily. He urged the United States to ask Sihanouk and Son Sann to disassociate themselves from Pol Pot and to join his government. He expressed a sense of urgency in this request and said direct talks between the United States and Cambodia were needed to help resolve the problem. The alternative, he said, is for Cambodia to solve the problem on its own. He said that under this option Pol Pot could be defeated and Vietnamese troops withdrawn in less than five years. The sooner Pol Pot is eliminated, he said, the sooner foreign troops could leave Cambodian soil.

With respect to MIAs, the Foreign Minister said he understands that there are 82 Americans missing in Cambodia. Despite the fact he categorized these persons as victims of imperialist American policies, he stressed that Cambodia would make efforts to search for MIAs on a humanitarian basis. He claimed to know personally of the general location of some crash sites but could not be certain they could be located because of difficult terrain and jungle. He said that many people who might remember the war and know of MIAs were killed by Pol Pot.

The Foreign Minister concluded his remarks by stating that he was finished with his preaching on the situation. He said the task at hand was to reconstruct the country. The delegation stated that it would inform the Department of State of the concerns of the Cambodian officials.

VIENTIANE

In Laos the Congressmen held separate meetings with Vice Foreign Minister Soubanh Srithirath and Acting Foreign Minister Khamphai Boupha. In addition, they met with numerous other officials at a dinner hosted by Theresa Tull, Charge' d'Affaires at

the American Embassy in Vientiane. Ms. Tull and her staff were most helpful both with the delegation visit and in stimulating overall improved relations between Laos and the United States. The Embassy was particularly instrumental in facilitating the provision of 5,000 tons of rice in response to a shortfall in southern Laos and has helped with the provision of emergency medical supplies to Laos.

The delegation stressed the importance of continued Lao progress in resolving as many cases of missing Americans as possible. The Lao officials stated that their country has been making considerable efforts in this regard and that whatever remains found have been given to the United States. They said that a joint Lao-American team would be able to visit the crash site of a downed AC 130 aircraft near Pakse as soon as the site is ready, noting that the terrain in the area is still too muddy from the recent rain season. The Lao officials also claimed to be making considerable efforts to find remains in other areas. They stressed that the issue of missing Americans is being treated as a humanitarian one. Noting that the Lao people also suffered heavily during the war, the officials expressed the hope that American assistance would be forthcoming as a matter of humanitarian concern, adding that American humanitarian aid would also help convince the Lao people of the propriety of searching for American MIAs. They further stated that Laos has 10,000 MIAs of its own. Because of the dense forest and small population it is difficult to find MIAs and even downed planes or remnants. The officials stated that, despite the difficulties, Laos would try to do its best to find them. They noted that the Lao people do this despite American bombing during the war because they are Buddhists and do not wish to take revenge on anyone.

The delegation expressed appreciation for the Lao efforts on MIAs. It noted recent American assistance of rice and medicine, as well as recent American votes in international financial institutions favoring loans to Laos. They again expressed the hope that further progress would be possible on MIAs. The Lao officials responded by alluding to other recent improvements in Lao-American relations, noting that the United States remained neutral when some Lao villages were "attacked" by Thailand, and that there are no more American-backed anti-Lao military activities, as in the past. The delegation expressed the hope for continued progress on MIAs and other matters and reiterated its support for the work of both countries' embassies.

Congressman Bonior raised the issue of MIA Robert Tucci, who was shot down over Laos in January 1979. Lao officials expressed an interest in the matter and a follow-up is expected.

RANGOON

The delegation had the opportunity to stop in Burma before returning to the United States. Ambassador Dan O'Donohue and his staff briefed the Members on the situation in Burma and on its relations with the United States. The delegation met with Foreign Minister U Chit Hlaing, who discussed general foreign policy questions and Burmese efforts to eliminate production and trafficking in opium. The Foreign Minister said Burma considers this a top priority and is doing its best in combatting the opium trade. During a dinner hosted by Ambassador O'Donohue, the delegation had the opportunity for discussion with a wide variety of government officials and business and social leaders.

A full list of officials met by the delegation in Indochina is as follows:

VIETNAM

Prime Minister – Pham Van Dong
 Foreign Minister – Nguyen Co Thach
 Vice Foreign Minister – Phan Doan Nam
 Vice Chairman of the National Assembly – Phan Anh
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs: MIA Commission Director –
 Cu Dinh Ba
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs: MIA Commission Member – Ngo Hoan
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs: MIA Commission Member –
 Vu Bac My
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Protocol – Doan Phi Luong
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Dung Van Ngoc
 Director of External Affairs, Ho Chi Minh City – Vu Hac Bong
 Vice Chairman of the City People's Committee – Le Quang Chanh
 Head of Commission on Agent Orange Ministry of Health –
 Le Cao Dai

British Embassy: Ambassador Michael Pike

France: Ambassador Yvan Bastouil

Denmark: Charge d'Affaires Ulrik Helweg-Larsen

Italy: Ambassador Lodovico Mazetti

Netherlands: Charge d'Affaires Hein C.R.M. Princen

LAOS

Acting Foreign Minister - Khamphai Boupha
Vice Foreign Minister - Soubanh Srithirath

CAMBODIA

Foreign Minister - Hun Sen
Director of Tuol Sleng prison - Ing Pech

Ms. Peou Lyda, Member, General Assembly and Sihanouk's cousin.

Ms. Phlek Phirun, Secretary General of General Assembly

Mr. My Samedy, Member of General Assembly

BURMA

Foreign Minister - U Chit Hlaing

